

**Democratic Women's Caucus**  
**60<sup>th</sup> Montana Legislature**  
**Helena, MT**

Dear Chairman Laslovich, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

RE: SB 454---Revising the offense of malicious intimidation or harassment to include sexual orientation, gender, and disability, revising the penalty for a restorative justice program as the enhancement for the sentence.

The Democratic Women's Caucus of the Montana State Legislature has identified SB 454 as one of its top issues for this session and we ask for your support of this legislation.


Montana's current law includes only race, creed, color, and national origin. SB 454 proposes to add gender, disability and sexual orientation to this list and we support this.

In addition, SB 454 includes provisions for restorative justice as a part of the healing process of a hate crime. Punishment is one strategy, but helping the victim as well as the offender through this process of restorative justice will emphasize healing the wounds of the victims, offenders and the communities.

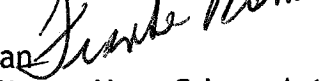
These victims could be our sisters, our children and grandchildren and our neighbors. We want a Montana where all its citizens can live knowing that there are laws that will protect them if they become a victim of a hate crime because of their gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Please support SB 454.

Sincerely,

  
Senator Carol Williams, Chair  
Democratic Women's Caucus

February 19, 2007

TO: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Representative Franke Wilmer, HD 64, Bozeman   
RE: Adding sexual orientation, gender, and disability to Hate Crimes Act

As former Chair of the Montana Human Rights Commission, a long-time human rights advocate, and a fellow legislator, I write in strong support of adding sexual orientation, gender, and disability as protected categories to existing Hate Crimes legislation. Montana would be the 25<sup>th</sup> state to add sexual orientation, the 21<sup>st</sup> state to add gender, and the 20<sup>th</sup> to include disability. Nationwide FBI statistics for 2004 indicate nearly 1200 individual incidents of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and 57 motivated by bias against the disabled. Let's join together to make all Montanans safe from violence, particularly violence motivated by hate and bias.